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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 000231

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/S AND AF/C

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [SF](#) [MASS](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: DRC AMBASSADOR TOUR D'HORIZON WITH AMBASSADOR

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Donald M. Gips for Reasons 1.4  
b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary: Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Ambassador Bene M'Poko, during a January 24 luncheon discussion with the Ambassador, offered his thoughts on a range of issues. M'Poko is planning to retire from diplomatic service and return to Congo in the near future, and he told us his recent efforts have been focused on guiding the year-long DRC presidency of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Having attended the SADC Summit in Maputo, M'Poko discussed SADC leaders' views on the Zimbabwe leadership crisis. Speaking on the challenges of promoting DRC, M'Poko complained about the corruption within various government ministries while calling for more American investment to balance the growing influence of China. M'Poko was, however, optimistic that the DRC had turned the corner from civil war to development, but he cautioned that political obstacles continue to block security sector reform.  
End summary

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Bio Note: Background on Ambassador Bene L. M'Poko  
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¶2. (C) Before his appointment as Ambassador, Bene M'Poko headed the UNDP office in South Africa for 15 years. M'poko said he did not meet President Joseph Kabila until after Kabila became president, when M'Poko's name was put forward as a candidate for foreign minister. M'Poko said he is planning to retire from public service soon and will return to the DRC to go into business, probably mining, but his family is planning to stay in South Africa. M'Poko is married to an AMCIT.

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A View from the DRC SADC Presidency  
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¶3. (C) M'Poko said he considers his major current role to have been in preparing for and guiding the GDRC's year-long presidency of SADC. M'Poko attended SADC's recent summit in Mozambique on leadership crises in Madagascar and Zimbabwe. Commenting on the situation in Zimbabwe, M'Poko described Kabila's relationship with Mugabe as "long-standing and complicated," commenting that Mugabe treats Kabila like a "little son," but adding that Kabila pushes back when pressed. M'Poko's understanding from Maputo is that Mugabe will move forward on the GPA only in so far as it is consistent with his reading of the constitution. Mugabe reportedly claimed that the Attorney General could not be dismissed without the concurrence of five judges. (Comment: This issue was apparently separate from the question of legality involving the initial appointment. End comment). According to M'Poko, Mugabe also told the SADC summit leaders that if governors were to be dismissed, they would need to be compensated. M'Poko's impression was that the SADC leaders

were generally sympathetic to Mugabe's complaints about the "sacrifices" he was being asked to make.

14. (C) In M'Poko's opinion, SADC leaders are still inclined to see MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai as the instrument of the UK, believing that former UK PM Blair convinced Tsvangirai to support the UK position on land reform in Zimbabwe. M'poko said that SADC leaders understand Mugabe would die before returning any land to dispossessed white farmers or compensating them. M'Poko commented that the only MDC leader who has the respect of the SADC chiefs is the MDC Treasury Minister Tendai Biti.  
QMinister Tendai Biti.

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The Challenges of Representing DRC  
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15. (C) M'Poko complained that he had grown tired of trying to convince South African companies to invest in his country because those companies he persuaded to go into DRC complained that Congolese ministers demanded bribes. According to M'Poko, Kabila is frustrated with DRC's endemic corruption, even from within his own party, and had asked M'Poko whether he should start executing people who were corrupt to send a message.

16. (C) M'Poko cited DRC's lack of infrastructure as another major area of frustration. He lamented that DRC has the potential to power and feed the region but lacks investors to develop its natural resources. He complained that "America is nowhere and the Chinese are everywhere." He claimed that Kabila is trying to balance the growing Chinese influence in

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DRC but has no viable alternatives to China for partnership in development.

17. (C) The Ambassador and M'Poko discussed the importance of building professional non-political security forces. M'Poko suggested that USG security sector assistance had been delayed due to obstructionism on the part of the Foreign Minister, who is not a political ally of Kabila. Commenting on the current security situation in DRC, M'Poko said that the civil war is over; what is left is conflict among illegal armed gangs. In M'Poko's view, DRC is stable enough to begin moving forward with development and economic growth. M'Poko expressed interest in meeting with Great Lakes Special Advisor Howard Wolpe the next time Wolpe is in Pretoria to discuss Great Lakes regional stability.

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Views on South African Politics  
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18. (C) M'Poko predicted that President Zuma would run for a second term. M'Poko believed that Zuma is in the process of distancing himself for all those who appear to campaign for his job. M'Poko said Zuma, true to his background in intelligence, never relies on one opinion, but balances all the views he hears, a trait which can slow decision-making.

GIPS